ORIGINAL EC COMICS FROM THE 1950s!

World Press

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EXTRA!

PORTER RISKS LIFE TO NAB RACKETEER

Nip Plot to Murder Reporter and Destroy Evidence

RACKETEER'S GIRL WILL TESTIFY, SAYS D.A.

Special to World Press

A daring reporter knowingly ed his life last night to help rehend Johnny Lombard, this s most notorious racketeer, police officials were lavish in r praise of the heroic man- in which the newsman, aided police, successfully brought personal crusade to a close. mbard has been connected numerous rackets but until has never been brought to with sufficient incriminat- evidence standing against . This, coupled with the tes- ny of Lombard's girl friend , makes police officials feel ain that this time he will not pe through any loopholes in law.

1932 Lombard was arrested policy making but was never ught to trial due to the dis- earance of the state's chief ness. In 1937 he was brought rial as a result of the now amous race track swindle but not convicted due to lack of dence, and in 1940 and '41 at- pts were made to jail him for me tax evasion but he was ased on a technicality.

t is commonly suspected that mbard is the head of a nation-

Continued on Page 3

PHOTO BY JOHNNY CRAIG

DATELINE: Algiers

Clutching furtively to the lower rim of the Mediterranean, Algiers hides like a preying reptile whose motionless form belies the poison that lurks within. It coils in the vast wastes of the desert, its people crawling through the alleyways and narrow streets, its heart embracing a million sins. By day it swelters beneath shimmering waves of heat, its face repelling the blistering sun, its buildings becoming an intricate pattern of black and white. By moonlight the glaring whiteness fades to blues and the dark shadows soften in contrast yet still seem impenetrable to the eye, enveloping the evil that pervades the atmosphere.

Keith Michaels, World Press correspondent, stepped casually from the hotel into the cobblestone street and pulled a cigarette from its pack. Over the momentary matchflare he studied the surroundings; the dirty, leaning houses with their black peep-hole windows that no light could penetrate, the congested arch-lined street full with its chanting beggars, its sing-songing merchants and shifty-eyed Arabs, its ugly, brazen women . . . and a Legionnaire.

It was a puzzling thing, for even if the man were not whom Keith had thought, he was surely American and in this part of the world a new-found kinsman was a happy event, a time for the slapping of backs, the swapping of news. But now there were matters more pressing. He had been sent here to get details of suspected sabotage at an American-leased oil field some miles outside the city, and he had lost enough time already.

The Legionnaire strode away, yet Keith was certain he had seen a glimmer of recognition in the man's face. In the newspaper game you automatically developed a keen knack of remembering faces, and Keith was positive the Legionnaire was an F.B.I. man named Brooks. But why was he here; and why in a Legionnaire's uniform? He moved back into the shadows and watched as a second Legionnaire joined the first. They spoke for a moment then disappeared.

At the oil field he talked with its supervisor who explained, "We thought it was an accident the first time a well exploded and went up, Michaels. We figured it to be gas expansion. But when it happened a second time we checked deeper and decided both were deliberate acts.

"Luckily, only small pockets of oil were destroyed. We think they had hoped to hit the real big pocket but missed. Here, I'll show you."

THIS CHART SHOWS THE RELATIVE SIZES OF THE OIL POCKETS! YOU CAN SEE THAT IF THE MAIN ONE WERE HIT, THE WHOLE FIELD WOULD GO UP!
MMM!

As he drove back to town he tried to formulate his story. There was little for him to go on; no new leads, no clues as to why or by whom it was done; nothing. Yet his editor would have his scalp if he didn't come up with something.

Suddenly he snapped out of his reverie. A crowd blocked the narrow street, and where there was a crowd there might be a story. He stopped the jeep and got out.

Boldly, he shouldered his way through the jabbering throng. Off the side of the road, lying face down in an alley, was the body of a Legionnaire. It was Brooks. And he was dead.

Quickly Keith knelt beside him, fumbling in the pockets. He found nothing. The clothes had been stripped of everything. But his eye alertly caught sight of an envelope nearby and he picked it up. It reeked of perfume.

It was obvious from the earring's condition that it had been worn until recently. Anything so clean couldn't possibly have lain in this place for long. It was a good lead.

Twenty minutes later he was inhaling the foul air of a small cafe, and watching with interest the rhythmical dance of a native girl. Her name was Shira, and she lacked one earring.

The tempo of the music increased to a frenzy of discordant sound that reverberated from the walls and ceiling as Shira brought her exciting dance to an exhausting climax.

The almost hostile audience condescended to reward her with a smattering of applause as Keith rose from his table and picked his way through the oppressive den to the rear. At the end of a long, cluttered hall he found the closet-sized room that served Shira for her costume changes. The scent of her perfume hung heavily in the stagnant air, but with the exception of some disordered clothing the room was empty.

Hurriedly, he squeezed through the tiny window that let him out on a back street. The momentary glitter of moonlight on her costume as she turned a corner signalled to Keith where Shira was, and he raced after her, through the now hushed, forbidding passageways and narrow footpaths, beneath tired, crumbling archways, in and out of darkened alleys that twisted like an agonized serpent trying vainly to escape a hopeless maze.

For a while her fleetness of foot and knowledge of the back-streets were an advantage, but inevitably Keith's superior strength and speed closed the gap.

I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU! I ONLY WANT INFORMATION! A LEGIONNAIRE FRIEND OF MINE WAS MURDERED TONIGHT... AND I THINK YOU CAN HELP ME FIND WHO DID IT!
LEGIONNAIRE? YOU MEAN... RALPH BROOKS? OH, THANK HEAVEN YOU ARE A FRIEND!

Mistily, her eyes gazed upon the earring and she seemed to lapse into her own little world of reverie. "That is my earring," she whispered. "I gave it to him tonight; a good luck charm that brought him only the worst fortune. After I finished my dance at the cafe, I received word that Ralph had been found dead, and I know that to be doubly safe they will try to kill me next. That is why I ran. I am afraid."

Here she paused, trying better to compose herself. Keith studied the beautiful face with its full lips and deep, dark eyes. Softly, inwardly, she cried. A single tear sparkled, trickled down her cheek, and suddenly he envied the dead man for having had the love of such a woman.

Weakly, she slumped against a grimy wall and gulped mouthfuls of air. "I am sorry I ran from you," she breathed, "but I thought you were going to kill me. Ralph . . . your friend; he and I were very much in love. I was with him earlier this evening. He told me he was going to arrest two Legionnaire saboteurs tonight."

"Did he tell you their names?" asked Keith.

She shook her head. "No. Only that he was going to arrest two Legionnaires at Sidi Bel Abba Oasis, in the desert, south of Algiers."

He withdrew the earring from his pocket and held it up so she could see it glistening in the moonlight. "What about this?" he pressed.

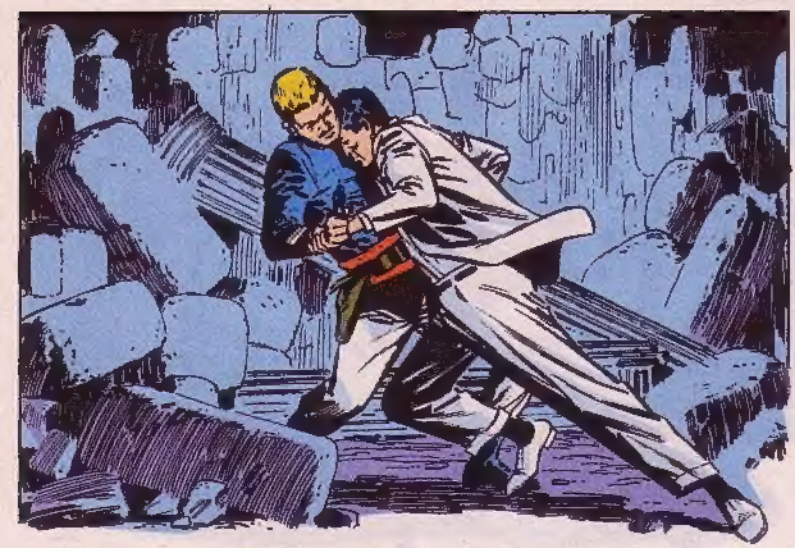
A thousand cymbals clanged in his head, and an ebony void settled upon him like a blanket, engulfing him in a silent, smothering embrace. Flashing whites exploded spasmodically in a blackness that changed from dark to progressively lighter shades of grey, gradually fusing into masses and shapes. The spinning surroundings slowed enough for him to see a face peering intently into his own. And then it was gone.

He struggled to his feet, striving to wipe the cobwebs from his brain. The image of the face hung suspended in his mind, begging to be recognized while his reeling, aching head sought to gain command of his senses. Shira was gone, and all he could remember was an oasis, in the desert, south of the city. He realized that even now she may be dead but he had to make some attempt to save her and the oasis was the only lead he had.

Ten minutes later he was racing across the sands on a rented camel, and the nebulous face that had been searing his memory he now recalled as belonging to the Legionnaire he had seen talking to his murdered friend.

It figured. Two Legionnaires, Shira had said. They killed Brooks, and now they had Shira. His only hope was that they would bring her to the oasis.

He reached the oasis with little trouble. As he crept quietly up to the ancient ruins the angry mutterings in a French tongue drifted on the breeze to his ears. He peered into the inner portions of the ruins where, illuminated by dim lantern-light, he saw two figures. Shira was seated on a slab of masonry, her face uplifted in defiance to the Legionnaire who stood before her. Calculating swiftly, Keith stepped to the rim of the tumbled wall and leaped.

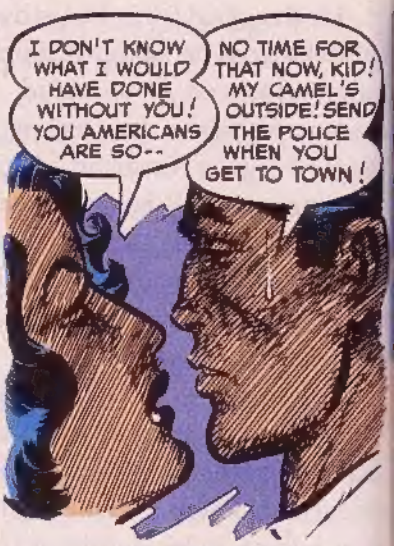


They fell heavily to the floor in a thrashing mass of arms and legs, grunts and shouts. A pistol appeared in the Legionnaire's hand, and they rolled over and over in the choking dust struggling for its possession, slugging and scrambling among the mortar blocks till at last a strong right cross jarred the gun loose. It clattered to the ground where Keith retrieved it and fired blindly. The Legionnaire fell.

She looked at him, wide-eyed with fright. "He was waiting for his companion, the other Legionnaire, who will be here any moment. Please. You must let me leave here before he arrives. I am so frightened."

"Okay," decided Keith, "Wait for me at the hotel. Don't speak to anyone, understand? If I'm lucky, this will all be over with tonight."

She kissed him lightly on the cheek.

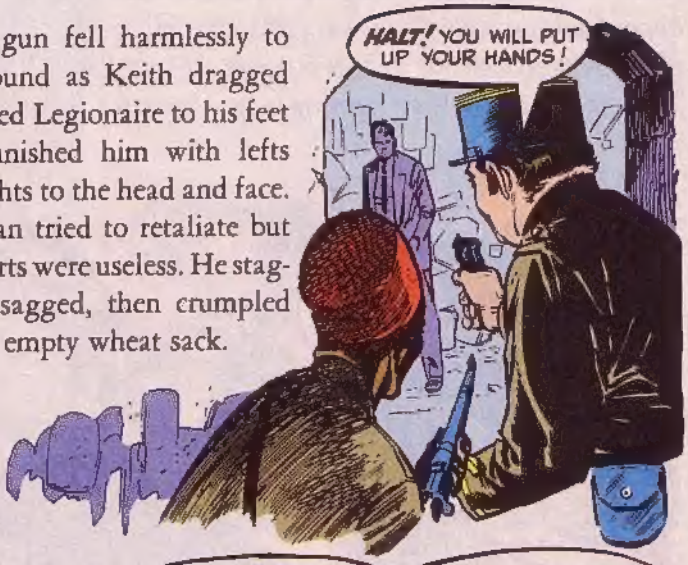

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT YOU! YOU AMERICANS ARE SO--
NO TIME FOR THAT NOW, KID! MY CAMEL'S OUTSIDE! SEND THE POLICE WHEN YOU GET TO TOWN!

He warned her not to head directly for the city, to avoid meeting the second saboteur, then she sped to the waiting camel, a whispered thank you trailing behind her. He watched till she disappeared, then turned and hid the Legionnaire in the shadows. Then he waited.

It seemed ages before he saw the Legionnaire bring his beast to a halt and stride softly, pistol drawn, to the doorway of the ruins.

The sudden impact of Keith's attack caught the Legionnaire by surprise, but not enough to dislodge the pistol from his grip, nor even to knock the man to the ground. Keith recoiled from the sharp blow of a fist, slammed his own deep into the man's mid-section. It had no effect at all. The man was strong; much stronger and younger than his first opponent, and Keith feared that he couldn't cope with it. He drove another fist into the face of the man who lost his footing and fell, dragging Keith with him. Desperately, Keith tried to snap a wrist-lock on the gun hand but the man was all fists, knees and elbows.

The gun fell harmlessly to the ground as Keith dragged the dazed Legionaire to his feet and punished him with lefts and rights to the head and face. The man tried to retaliate but his efforts were useless. He staggered, sagged, then crumpled like an empty wheat sack.



Keith turned, relieved to see the uniforms of the Algerian Police. He smiled weakly, gasping for breath, gesticulating tiredly, hoping to make his hands say what he couldn't force his mouth to utter. But at length his heaving lungs replenished their air supply and he could speak.

"I would have been happier," he began, "if you had come a few minutes sooner. He was tougher than I expected. Almost had me." He groped through his pockets, pulled a ragged cigarette from a crumpled pack. "I'm Keith Michaels," he continued, "World Press. I've just wrapped up this sabotage case for you."

SEE, TWO SABOTEURS. ONE IN THE CORNER... AND THIS ONE ON THE FLOOR!
OUI, MONSIEUR. ZEE ONE IN ZEE CORNER IS A SABOTEUR. BUT ZEES ONE... MAIS NON! HE IS NO SABOTEUR!

Surprised, Keith jerked the cigarette from his lips. "What are you talking about?" he demanded angrily. "He was with the Legionnaire who was killed this evening. I saw him. And he was one of the guys who hit me on the head."

The French officer was growing impatient. "Oui, monsieur," he said testily. "He was with the American, and he barely escaped with his life when the American was killed. He recognized the assassin and knew the girl would be contacted so he tried to find her. But he was too late. Instead he found you, lying unconscious."

Keith's face slackened. "You're joking."

"I make no jokes," loudly replied the officer. "After he went through your clothes and discovered you were a newspaperman, he left to tell us what happend. That is how we are here. This man you have been fighting is an Algerian agent!"

From far off came the rumble of explosions, rolling across the great expanse of desert sand, and all at once they knew it was too late. With sinking heart, Keith pictured the erupting earth of almost twenty-two square miles of oil field. He closed his eyes tightly and tried to shut out the vision of the fiery holocaust, but he didn't succeed.

The main oil pocket had been hit, and he knew that hidden in some unknown quarter, a beautiful woman was laughing and calling him fool. But he knew in his heart she could not escape, for he wouldn't rest until she was punished.

STEVE RAMPART

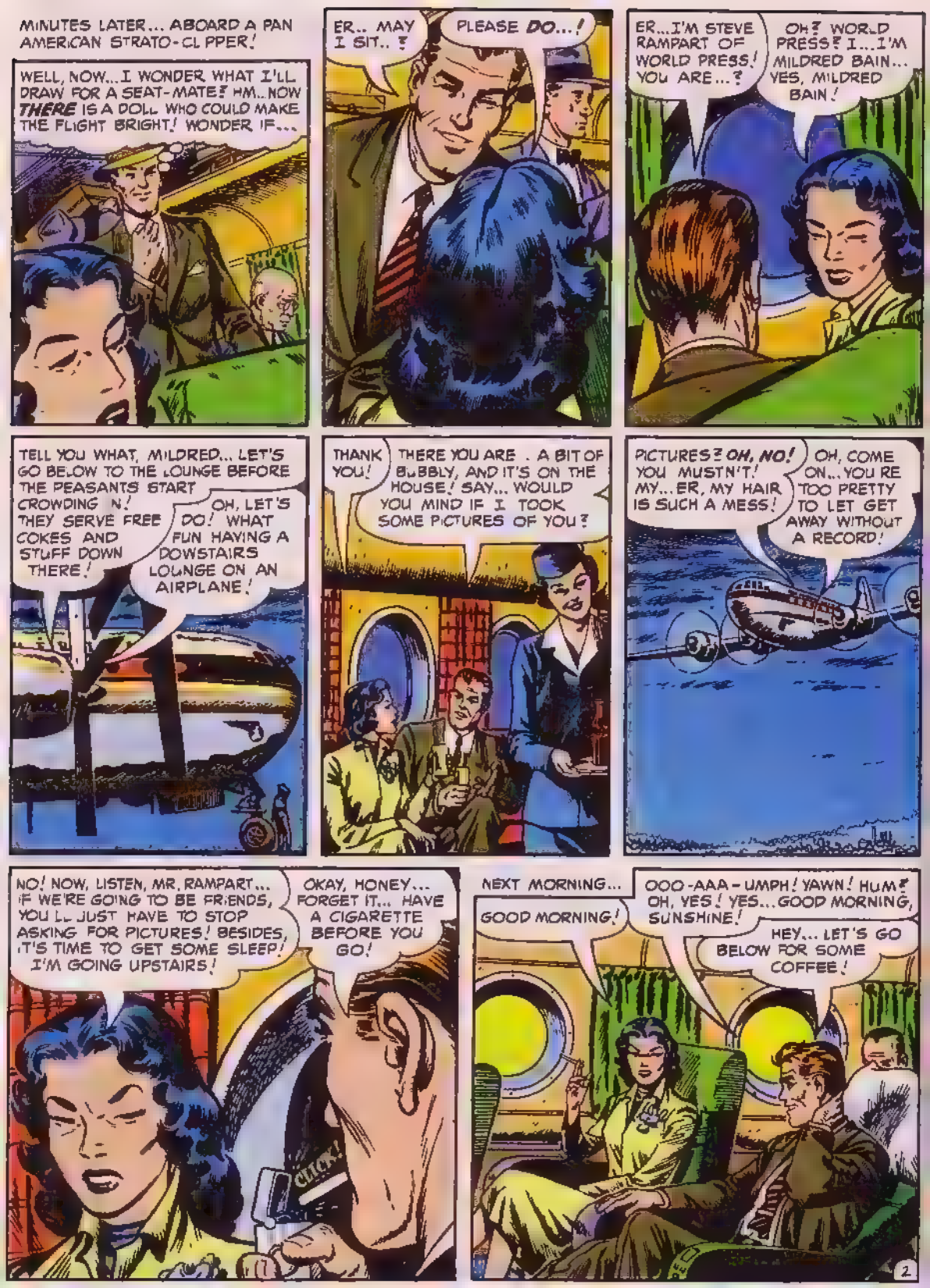
IT IS AN HOUR LATER...AS KEITH MICHAELS STANDS STUNNED...STARING AT THE DEVASTATED REFINERY... AT THE BRIGHT ORANGE FLAMES LICKING SKYWARD INTO GREAT, GREASY, BLACK CLOUDS OF SMOKE! THE SOUND OF THE FLAMES IS LIKE THUNDER!
GOOD GRIEF! WHAT HAVE I DONE?!
DANGER
JOHN SEVERIN

LISTEN, RAMPART... I'M IN TROUBLE! I'VE BEEN DONE BY A DAME. I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO THE CITY AND LOOK FOR HER WITH THE COPS... SO I'LL EXPLAIN TO YOU LATER! MEANWHILE, YOU GET SOME PICTURES...OKAY?
RIGHT YOU ARE! THIS IS A DOOZY!

THE NEXT DAY ON A PLANE TO PARIS...
...AND THAT'S THE STORY, STEVE! SHE TOOK ME IN, HORSE, FOOT, AND GUNS! THEN, SOMEHOW, SHE DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE. ME...THE AUTHORITIES ASKED POLITELY TO MOVE ON. I'LL BET THEY NEVER LET ME BACK IN ALGIERS AGAIN!

WA-HOO! OLD LADY- KILLER KEITH! WHAT A BLOW! WAIT UNTIL VICKI GETS HER HANDS ON THIS STORY!
THANKS, PAL... THAT'S WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR...SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING!

PARIS ... LE BOURGET...
SO LONG, CHUM! THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!
SO LONG, KEITH... I'M ON A PAN AM FLIGHT TO NEW YORK IN ABOUT 15 MINUTES! I WISH YOU LUCK... AND I'LL SEE YOU STATESIDE NEXT MONTH, RIGHT?
CLIPPER
PAA


MINUTES LATER... ABOARD A PAN AMERICAN STRATO-CLIPPER!
WELL, NOW... I WONDER WHAT I'LL DRAW FOR A SEAT-MATE? HM.. NOW THERE IS A DOLL WHO COULD MAKE THE FLIGHT BRIGHT! WONDER IF...
ER.. MAY I SIT.. ?
PLEASE DO...!
ER...I'M STEVE RAMPART OF WORLD PRESS! YOU ARE...?
OH? WORLD PRESS? I...I'M MILDRED BAIN... YES, MILDRED BAIN!
TELL YOU WHAT, MILDRED... LET'S GO BELOW TO THE LOUNGE BEFORE THE PEASANTS START CROWDING IN! THEY SERVE FREE COKES AND STUFF DOWN THERE!
OH, LET'S DO! WHAT FUN HAVING A DOWNSTAIRS LOUNGE ON AN AIRPLANE!
THANK YOU!
THERE YOU ARE . A BIT OF BUBBLY, AND IT'S ON THE HOUSE! SAY... WOULD YOU MIND IF I TOOK SOME PICTURES OF YOU?
PICTURES? OH, NO! YOU MUSTN'T! MY... ER, MY HAIR IS SUCH A MESS!
OH, COME ON... YOU RE TOO PRETTY TO LET GET AWAY WITHOUT A RECORD!
NO! NOW, LISTEN, MR. RAMPART... IF WE'RE GOING TO BE FRIENDS, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO STOP ASKING FOR PICTURES! BESIDES, IT'S TIME TO GET SOME SLEEP! I'M GOING UPSTAIRS!
OKAY, HONEY... FORGET IT... HAVE A CIGARETTE BEFORE YOU GO!
CLICK!
NEXT MORNING...
GOOD MORNING!
OOO-AAA-UMPH! YAWN! HUM? OH, YES! YES... GOOD MORNING, SUNSHINE!
HEY... LET'S GO BELOW FOR SOME COFFEE!
2

AS THEY WALK DOWN THE AISLE...
LIDDLE ONE... WHERE DO YOU GO? ID IS ALMOST TIME... WE ARE NEARING DA COAST!
HEY... CHUM... TAKE YOUR HAND OFF HER!
YANKEE DOG!
WHY, YOU...
STEVE, DON'T! THIS IS MAX! WE'RE GO.NG DOWN FOR COFFEE, MAX!
STEVE... YOU'VE GOT AN AWFUL TEMPER!
HOW'D I KNOW HE WAS A PAL OF YOURS? HE LOOKS LIKE THE SECOND MURDERER IN MACBETH!
I'M PLEASED YOU TOOK ME SERIOUSLY ABOUT THE PICTURES, STEVE! YOU HAVEN'T ASKED FOR ONE ALL MORNING!
DON'T HAVE TO, MILDRED. I'VE ALREADY TAKEN ABOUT TWO DOZEN WITH THIS!
WHAT! HERE, GIVE ME!
WHOOPS...STEADY AS YOU GO, GIRL! THAT'S AN EXPENSIVE LITTLE GADGET!
LIDDLE ONE... WE'RE...
MAX... HE'S GOT PICTURES OF ME IN THAT CIGARETTE LIGHTER THING! GET IT!
WHA...
ALL RIGHT, YANKEE... GIF ID TO ME BEFORE WE BREAK YOU INTO LIDDLE PIECES!
COME AND GET IT, BIG BOY... IF YOU REALLY THINK YOU CAN!
THE TWO MUGS LEAP CONFIDENTLY TO THE ATTACK... BUT, SUDDENLY, RAMPART EXPLODES WITH CRUSHING VIOLENCE! HIS SMILE REMAINS UNRUFFLED!
SAY... MILDRED... OR WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS... I JUST THOUGHT OF SOMETHING! I BET I KNOW A FRIEND OF YOURS!
3

YES...I THINK YOU DO, MR. RAMPART!
THUD!

UMPHH... WHAT HIT ME? OH... MILDRED... CAMERA...
IT'S GONE!

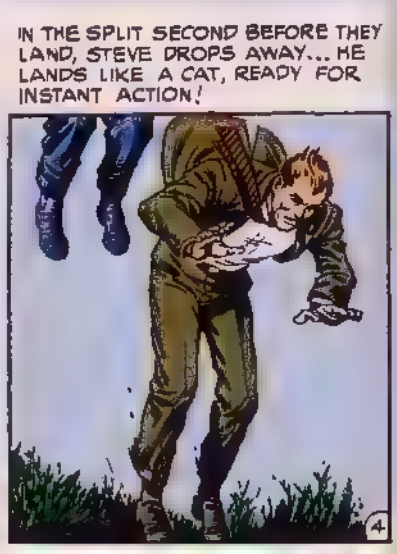
WHERE'D THEY GO? THEY MUST BE SOMEWHERE... WE'RE STILL IN THE AIR... OOPS!

STAND BACK... ALL OF YOU! YOU, YANKEE DOG... STAY WHERE...

LIKE HECK... YOU'VE GOT MY THOUSAND-BUCK CAMERA!

LED GO! LED GO! YOU KILL US BOTH, YANKEE DOG!
THE THINGS I'LL DO FOR A STORY!
THE OTHER TWO MUST HAVE JUMPED FIRST!

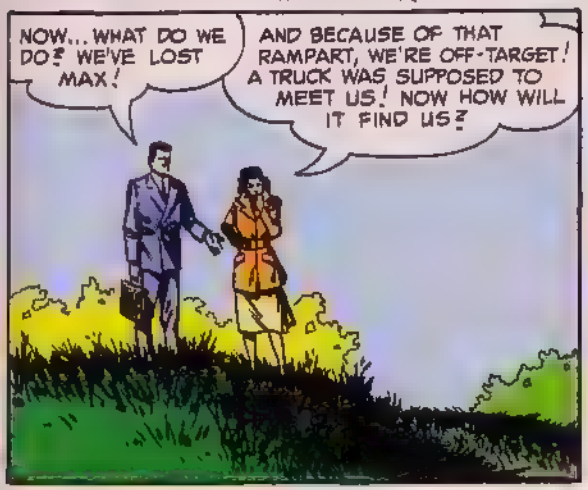
THE TIP OF LONG ISLAND SPINS 15,000 FEET BELOW AS RAMPART AND MAX HURTLE GROUNDWARD! AT 10,000 FEET, MAX'S CLAWING HAND FINDS THE RIP-CORD... STEVE HANGS ON LIKE A LEECH!

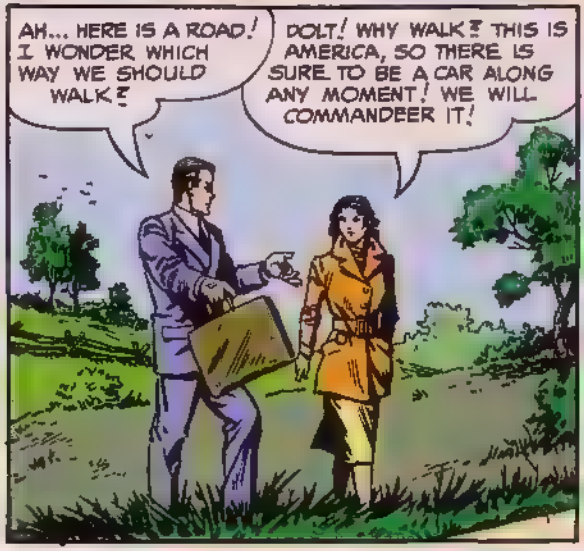

IN THE SPLIT SECOND BEFORE THEY LAND, STEVE DROPS AWAY... HE LANDS LIKE A CAT, READY FOR INSTANT ACTION!
4

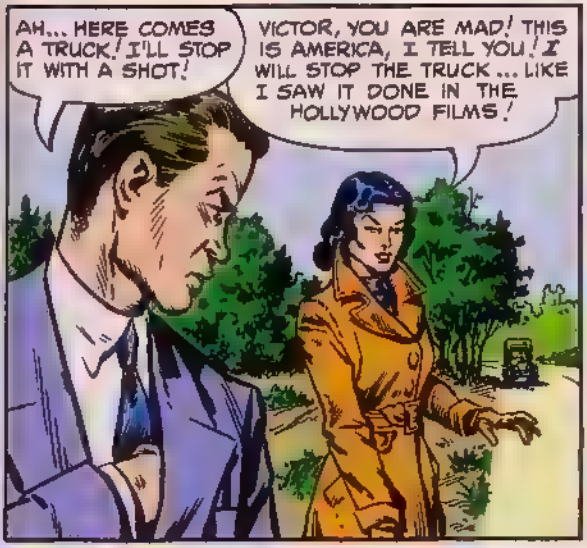
AS MAX HITS THE GROUND, RAMPART IS ON HIM LIKE A TIGER... THERE IS A SHORT STRUGGLE...

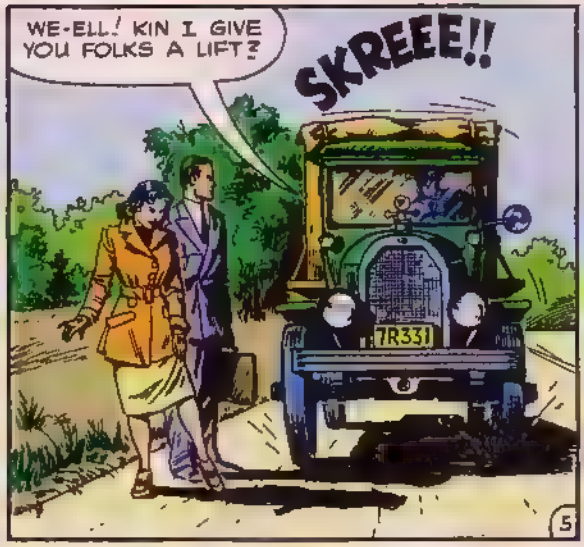
THEN...

MEANWHILE, "MILDRED" AND HER OTHER HENCHMAN HAVE LANDED SEVERAL MIGS AWAY!


NOW... WHAT DO WE DO? WE'VE LOST MAX!
AND BECAUSE OF THAT RAMPART, WE'RE OFF-TARGET! A TRUCK WAS SUPPOSED TO MEET US! NOW HOW WILL IT FIND US?


AH... HERE IS A ROAD! I WONDER WHICH WAY WE SHOULD WALK?
DOLT! WHY WALK? THIS IS AMERICA, SO THERE IS SURE TO BE A CAR ALONG ANY MOMENT! WE WILL COMMANDEER IT!

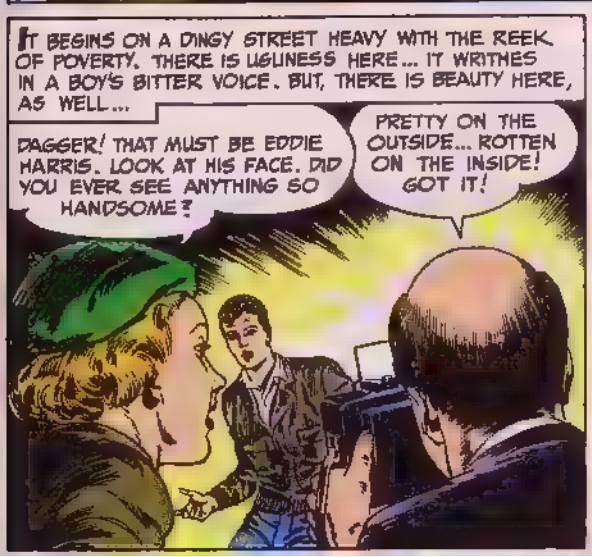

AH... HERE COMES A TRUCK! I'LL STOP IT WITH A SHOT!
VICTOR, YOU ARE MAD! THIS IS AMERICA, I TELL YOU! I WILL STOP THE TRUCK... LIKE I SAW IT DONE IN THE HOLLYWOOD FILMS!

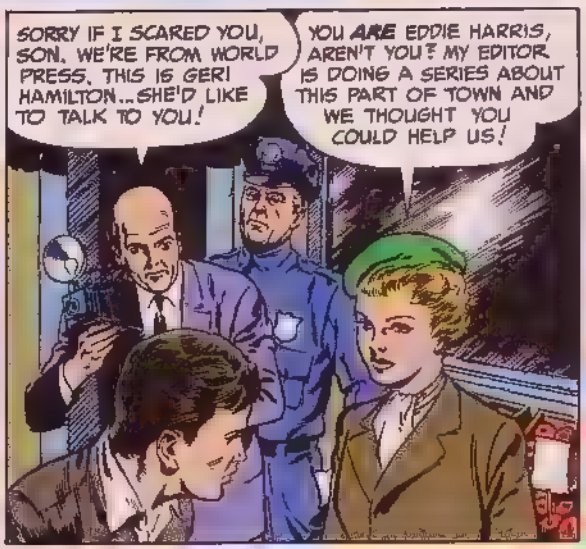


ALL RIGHT NOW, VICTOR... WHEN WE GET IN, YOU PULL YOUR GUN AND WE'LL TAKE OVER, YES?
YAH!
THAT'S RIGHT, FOLKS... JIST HOP RIGHT IN AND... HEEY... AH...
GET DOWN FROM...
HI-YUP... WHAT IS...
EEK!
WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHO... MY ARMS ARE PINNED!
EEEEE! YOU! RAMPART!
THAT'S ME! YOU DIDN'T THINK I'D PART WITH MY CAMERA EASY, DID YOU?
POP... YOU HOLD THE LADY! I SUSPECT SHE'S WANTED BY THE ALGIERS PO-LICE... AREN'T YOU, HONEY? MEANWHILE, I'LL TAKE SOME OF THE FIGHT OUT OF HER BOY FRIEND HERE!
LATER...
WELL, YOUNG FELLA... WE GOT ALL THREE OF 'EM IN BACK NOW AND WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO THE POLICE... BUT WHY ARE YOU LAFFIN' SO HARD?
OH... I WAS JUST THINKING ABOUT TOUGH MAX BACK THERE ALWAYS CALLING ME YANKEE DOG! WONDER HOW HE ENJOYS THE REAL ARTICLE!
YIPE!
OUCH! HELP!
YIPE! YIPE! YIPE!
GED OUT! STOP!
YIPE!
YIPE!
YIPE!
YIPE!
YIPE!
YIPE!
YIPE!
COUNTY
POUND
7R33Y
THE END

GERI HAMILTON

EDDIE, LISTEN TO ME! FIND A JOB. STRAIGHTEN OUT. FOR YOUR FATHER'S SAKE! STOP THINKING OF YOURSELF AS SOMETHING SPECIAL!
I AM SOMETHING SPECIAL! AND POP LUCCA ISN'T MY FATHER! MY FATHER WAS SOMEBODY! HE MUST HAVE BEEN! OKAY, SO POP RAISED ME. NOBODY ASKED HIM!
GROCERIES
PETER LUCCA PROPRIETOR


IT BEGINS ON A DINGY STREET HEAVY WITH THE REEK OF POVERTY. THERE IS UGLINESS HERE... IT WRITHES IN A BOY'S BITTER VOICE. BUT, THERE IS BEAUTY HERE, AS WELL...
DAGGER! THAT MUST BE EDDIE HARRIS. LOOK AT HIS FACE. DID YOU EVER SEE ANYTHING SO HANDSOME?
PRETTY ON THE OUTSIDE... ROTTEN ON THE INSIDE! GOT IT!


SORRY IF I SCARED YOU, SON. WE'RE FROM WORLD PRESS. THIS IS GERI HAMILTON... SHE'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU!
YOU ARE EDDIE HARRIS, AREN'T YOU? MY EDITOR IS DOING A SERIES ABOUT THIS PART OF TOWN AND WE THOUGHT YOU COULD HELP US!

SO WHAT? WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH ME? I DIDN'T SEND FOR YOU! I'VE MET REPORTERS BEFORE... AND I DON'T LIKE 'EM!
I'LL BET. RELAX, JUNIOR. THIS SERIES IS ON CRIME, AND WITH YOUR RECORD FOR PETTY ARRESTS, YOU MUST BE AN EXPERT!
EDDIE... WHAT HE MEANS IS THAT IF WE CAN GET ENOUGH INFORMATION ABOUT SLUM CONDITIONS, MAYBE WE CAN HELP OTHER BOYS!
I HELP MYSELF! AND I DON'T GIVE A HOOT ABOUT ANYONE ELSE! IF YOU WANT THE SAD STORY OF MY LIFE, ASK CONLEY.
EDDIE! EDDIE, WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING? I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU ALL DAY!
LET HIM GO, POP. THESE PEOPLE ARE FROM THE NEWSPAPERS. MAYBE BETWEEN US WE CAN TELL THEM ABOUT EDDIE. IT MIGHT BE... A GOOD IDEA.
INSIDE, THE GROCERY IS AS DARK AND DINGY AS THE STREET. THE ROOMS AT THE BACK ARE TINY. AND THE STORY GERI HEARS IS ALL PAIN, ALL SORROW.
THEN... YOU'VE BOTH KNOWN EDDIE ALL HIS LIFE. I HEARD HIM MENTION HIS FATHER. WHO WAS HE?
JUST A MAN. HE DIED IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, AND MY WIFE AND I ADOPTED EDDIE. WE... WE ALWAYS WANTED... A SON. NOW, SHE'S GONE... I'M... I'M ALMOST GLAD.
EDDIE THINKS HE'S SPECIAL, MISS HAMILTON. BECAUSE OF HIS LOOKS. POP AND I HAVE TRIED TO KEEP HIM STRAIGHT, BUT... IT'S... IT'S TOUGH.
IT ISN'T EDDIE'S FAULT! HE... HE WANTS THINGS. LUXURIES! HE THINKS HE'S TOO GOOD FOR THE SLUMS. BUT HE ISN'T REALLY BAD!
MISS HAMILTON, MAYBE YOU CAN HELP! TOMORROW IS EDDIE'S BIRTHDAY. WE'RE HAVING A PARTY FOR HIM... A SURPRISE! YOU'RE A STRANGER... HE MIGHT LISTEN TO YOU!
OF COURSE, MISTER LUCCA! I UNDERSTAND. I'LL BE HERE! AND I'LL DO MY BEST. NOW, I'M AFRAID WE'LL HAVE TO BE GOING!
GROCERIES
THOSE TWO POOR OLD MEN. TRYING SO HARD FOR THAT BOY, AND ALL THEY SEEM TO HAVE GOTTEN IN RETURN IS MISERY!
YEAH, SEEMS A SHAME, DOESN'T IT? BUT THAT KID IS DIFFERENT! LOOKS LIKE A REAL ARISTOCRAT! I WONDER WHAT HIS REAL FATHER WOULD THINK OF HIM!
2

BUT WONDERING CAN WAIT. EVEN REPORTERS CAN BE SENTIMENTAL SOMETIMES, AND GERI IS A WOMAN. THE NEXT EVENING SHE IS AT THE STORE EARLY...

POP, WHY DON'T YOU COME IN AND SIT DOWN? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO STAY OFF YOUR FEET WITH THAT BAD HEART OF YOURS! EDDIE WILL BE HERE SOON.

I'M ALL RIGHT, MIKE. HAPPINESS IS GOOD MEDICINE. IT ISN'T EVERY DAY A MAN'S SON BECOMES NINETEEN. I'LL JUST WATCH FOR EDDIE!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY EDDIE

AN OLD MAN STANDS AT A GRIMY WINDOW, SMILING. AND THEN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, THE SMILE FADES. THE HOURS PASS, AND THE END IS NOT A MATTER FOR SMILING...

MIKE, WHAT IS IT? THAT CALL.... IT WAS ABOUT EDDIE, WASN'T IT?

THAT'S RIGHT, POP. HE...HE'S IN JAIL. BURGLARY. WE'D BETTER GET DOWN TO THE STATION HOUSE. MAYBE... MAYBE IT'S JUST... A MISTAKE!

AT THE END, THREE PEOPLE STAND IN A CELL, AND A FOURTH SNEERS...

EDDIE...YOU DIDN'T DO IT, DID YOU? JUST SAY YOU DIDN'T, AND WE'LL BELIEVE YOU. WE'LL ***HELP*** YOU!

STOP PAWING ME! OKAY! I DIDN'T DO IT! I WASN'T ANYWHERE NEAR THAT STORE THEY SAY I ROBBED TONIGHT! NOW, LET'S SEE YOU GET ME OUT OF HERE!

BUT SOMETIMES THE WHEELS OF LAW MOVE SLOWLY. IT TAKES A MONTH. THEN GERI HAS A STORY TO WRITE...

SO THE KID GOT OFF? WELL, THAT ABOUT WRAPS UP THE STORY OF EDDIE, EH, GERI?

NOT QUITE, MAC! I KNOW WE'VE FINISHED OUR SLUM SERIES, BUT I THINK THE EDDIE HARRIS STORY IS JUST BEGINNING! I'D LIKE TO STAY ON IT!

IT'S JUST A HUNCH, BUT SOMETIMES A HUNCH PAYS OFF. AN EDITOR NODS... AND AN HOUR LATER THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE STORY BEGINS...

EDDIE, DON'T! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING! I THOUGHT YOU'D BE HAPPY WHEN YOU CAME HOME!

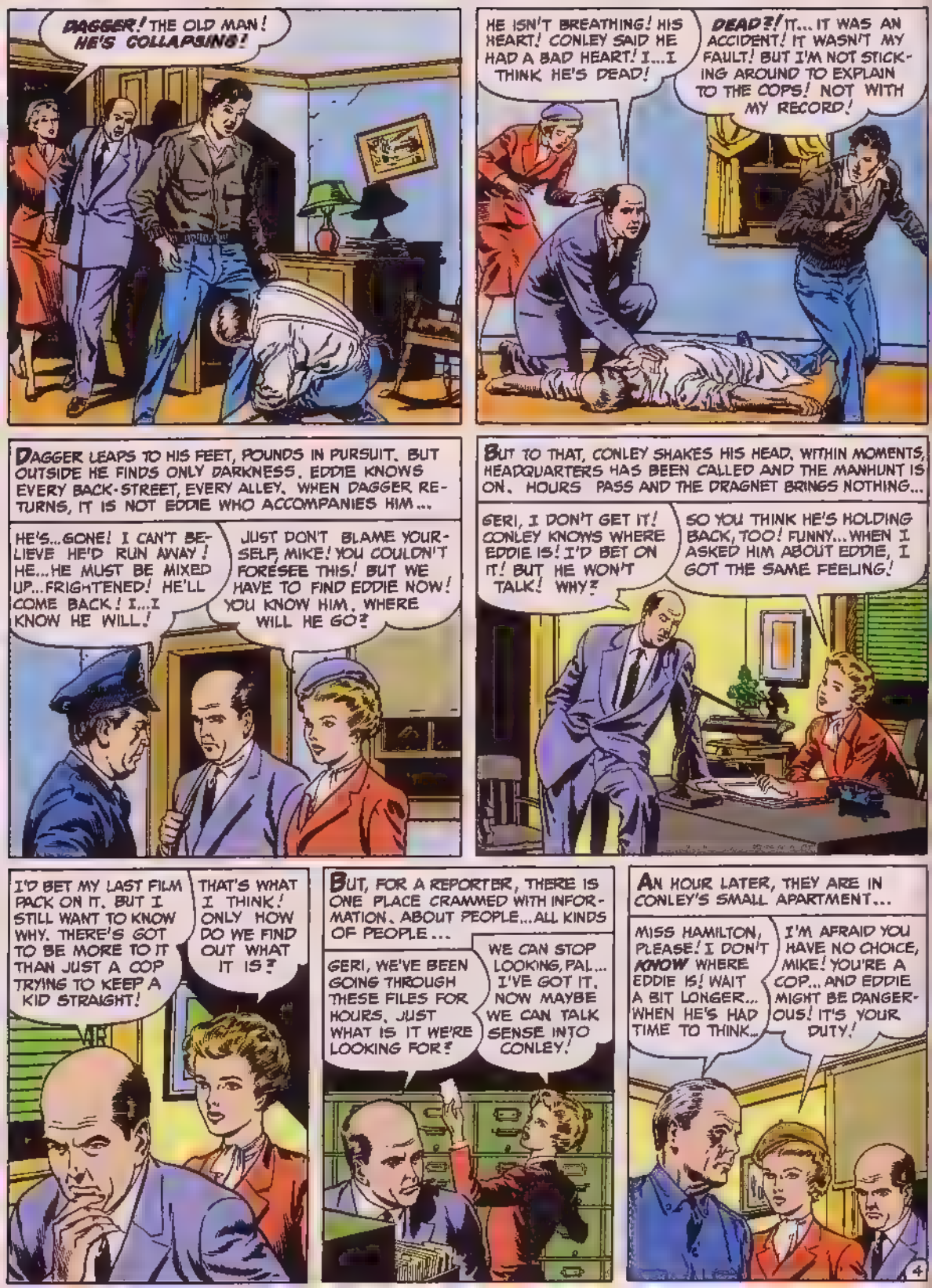
HAPPY? IN THIS RATHOLE? NOW WHERE IS IT? COME ON! TELL ME! WHERE'S MY BED?!

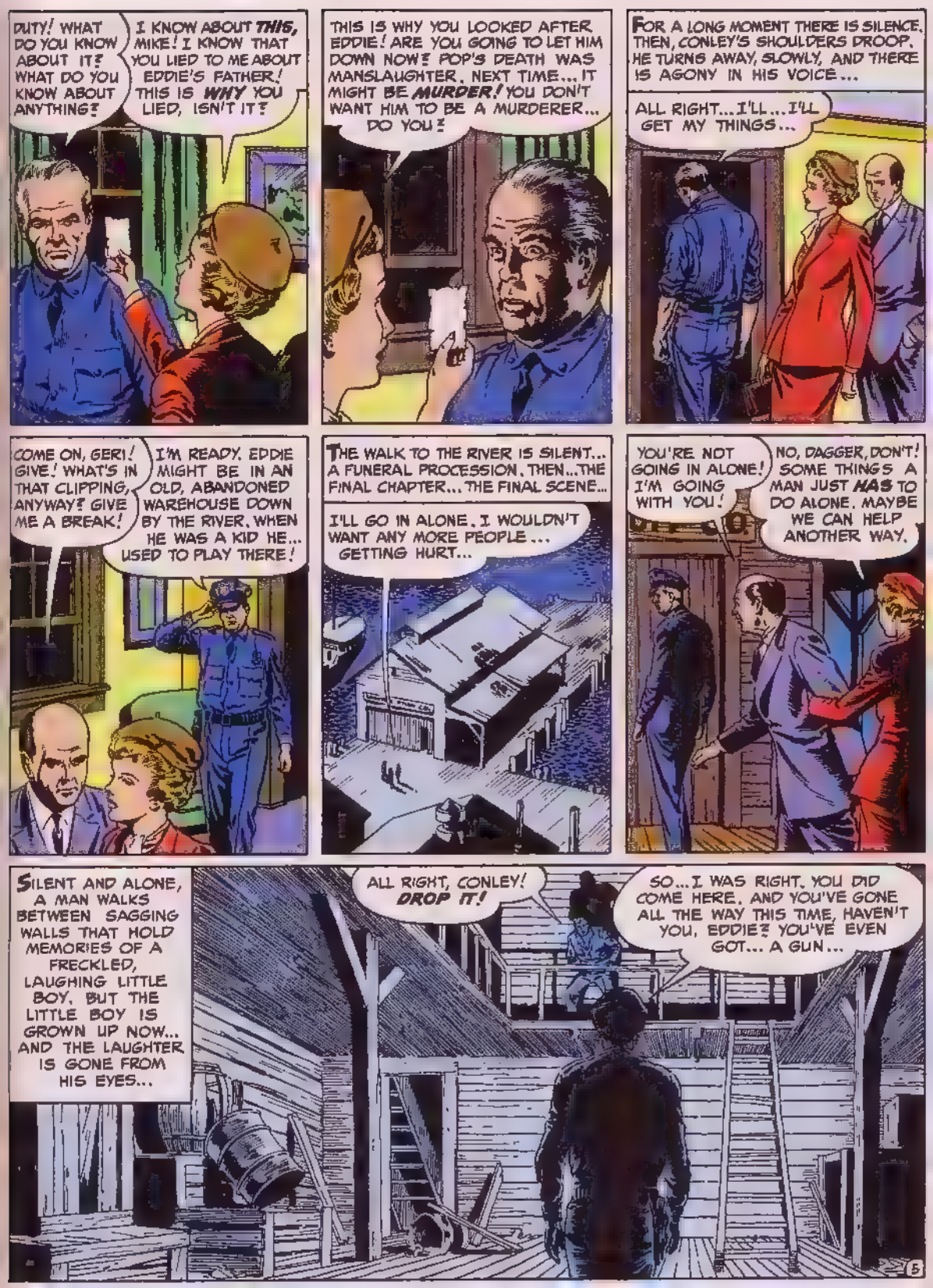
I...I BURNED IT, EDDIE! I... I WANTED YOU TO BE HAPPY! I...I GOT RID OF ALL YOUR OLD FURNITURE. I BOUGHT NEW THINGS FOR YOU!

YOU...YOU ***BURNED*** IT? ***YOU BURNED MY BED?***

YOU OLD FOOL! I OUGHT TO SHAKE THE LIFE OUT OF YOU! I HAD TWO HUNDRED BUCKS HIDDEN IN THAT BED!

FROM... FROM THE... NO.. NO.. EDDIE.

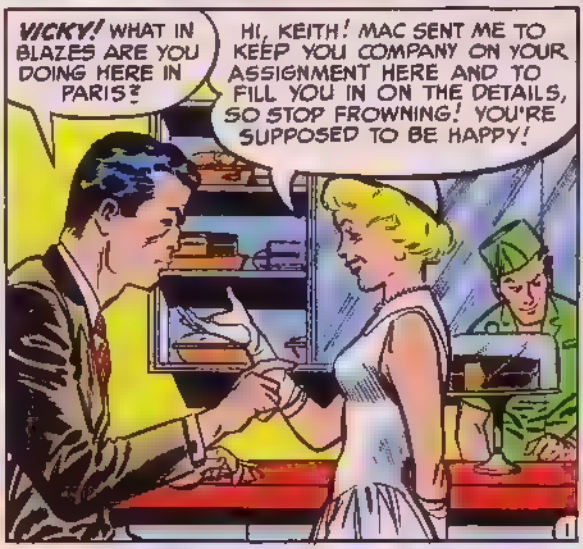

DAGGER! THE OLD MAN! HE'S COLLAPSING!
HE ISN'T BREATHING! HIS HEART! CONLEY SAID HE HAD A BAD HEART! I...I THINK HE'S DEAD!
DEAD?! IT... IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! IT WASN'T MY FAULT! BUT I'M NOT STICKING AROUND TO EXPLAIN TO THE COPS! NOT WITH MY RECORD!
DAGGER LEAPS TO HIS FEET, POUNDS IN PURSUIT. BUT OUTSIDE HE FINDS ONLY DARKNESS. EDDIE KNOWS EVERY BACK-STREET, EVERY ALLEY. WHEN DAGGER RETURNS, IT IS NOT EDDIE WHO ACCOMPANIES HIM...
HE'S...GONE! I CAN'T BELIEVE HE'D RUN AWAY! HE...HE MUST BE MIXED UP...FRIGHTENED! HE'LL COME BACK! I...I KNOW HE WILL!
JUST DON'T BLAME YOURSELF, MIKE! YOU COULDN'T FORESEE THIS! BUT WE HAVE TO FIND EDDIE NOW! YOU KNOW HIM. WHERE WILL HE GO?
BUT TO THAT, CONLEY SHAKES HIS HEAD. WITHIN MOMENTS, HEADQUARTERS HAS BEEN CALLED AND THE MANHUNT IS ON. HOURS PASS AND THE DRAGNET BRINGS NOTHING...
GERI, I DON'T GET IT! CONLEY KNOWS WHERE EDDIE IS! I'D BET ON IT! BUT HE WON'T TALK! WHY?
SO YOU THINK HE'S HOLDING BACK, TOO! FUNNY...WHEN I ASKED HIM ABOUT EDDIE, I GOT THE SAME FEELING!
I'D BET MY LAST FILM PACK ON IT. BUT I STILL WANT TO KNOW WHY. THERE'S GOT TO BE MORE TO IT THAN JUST A COP TRYING TO KEEP A KID STRAIGHT!
THAT'S WHAT I THINK! ONLY HOW DO WE FIND OUT WHAT IT IS?
BUT, FOR A REPORTER, THERE IS ONE PLACE CRAMMED WITH INFORMATION. ABOUT PEOPLE...ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE...
GERI, WE'VE BEEN GOING THROUGH THESE FILES FOR HOURS. JUST WHAT IS IT WE'RE LOOKING FOR?
WE CAN STOP LOOKING, PAL... I'VE GOT IT. NOW MAYBE WE CAN TALK SENSE INTO CONLEY!
AN HOUR LATER, THEY ARE IN CONLEY'S SMALL APARTMENT...
MISS HAMILTON, PLEASE! I DON'T KNOW WHERE EDDIE IS! WAIT A BIT LONGER... WHEN HE'S HAD TIME TO THINK...
I'M AFRAID YOU HAVE NO CHOICE, MIKE! YOU'RE A COP... AND EDDIE MIGHT BE DANGEROUS! IT'S YOUR DUTY!
4

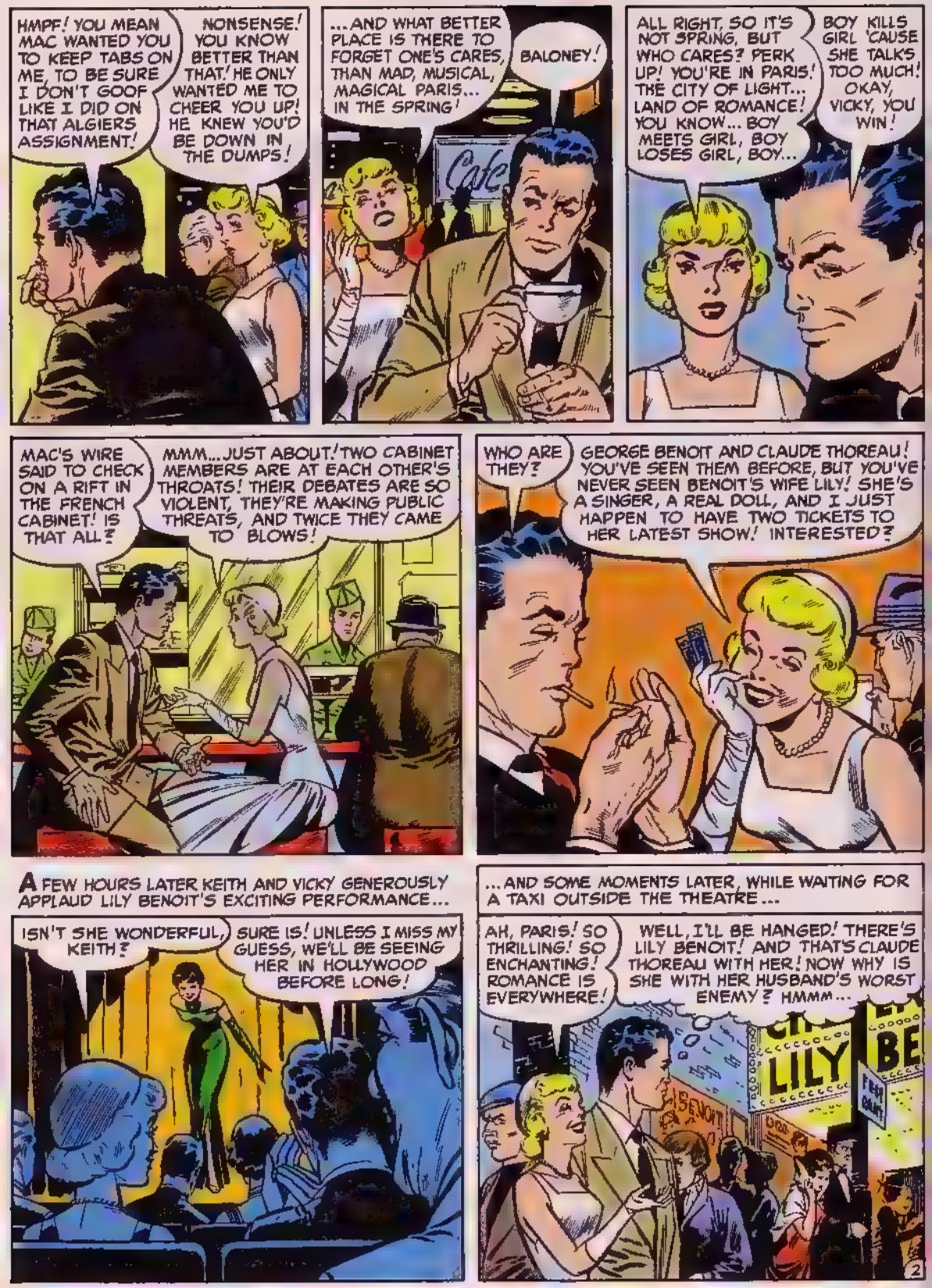

DUTY! WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT IT? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ANYTHING?
I KNOW ABOUT THIS, MIKE! I KNOW THAT YOU LIED TO ME ABOUT EDDIE'S FATHER! THIS IS WHY YOU LIED, ISN'T IT?
THIS IS WHY YOU LOOKED AFTER EDDIE! ARE YOU GOING TO LET HIM DOWN NOW? POP'S DEATH WAS MANSLAUGHTER, NEXT TIME... IT MIGHT BE MURDER! YOU DON'T WANT HIM TO BE A MURDERER... DO YOU?
FOR A LONG MOMENT THERE IS SILENCE. THEN, CONLEY'S SHOULDERS DROOP. HE TURNS AWAY, SLOWLY, AND THERE IS AGONY IN HIS VOICE...
ALL RIGHT... I'LL... I'LL GET MY THINGS...
COME ON, GERI! GIVE! WHAT'S IN THAT CLIPPING, ANYWAY? GIVE ME A BREAK!
I'M READY. EDDIE MIGHT BE IN AN OLD, ABANDONED WAREHOUSE DOWN BY THE RIVER. WHEN HE WAS A KID HE... USED TO PLAY THERE!
THE WALK TO THE RIVER IS SILENT... A FUNERAL PROCESSION. THEN... THE FINAL CHAPTER... THE FINAL SCENE...
I'LL GO IN ALONE. I WOULDN'T WANT ANY MORE PEOPLE... GETTING HURT...
YOU'RE NOT GOING IN ALONE! I'M GOING WITH YOU!
NO, DAGGER, DON'T! SOME THINGS A MAN JUST HAS TO DO ALONE. MAYBE WE CAN HELP ANOTHER WAY.
SILENT AND ALONE, A MAN WALKS BETWEEN SAGGING WALLS THAT HOLD MEMORIES OF A FRECKLED, LAUGHING LITTLE BOY. BUT THE LITTLE BOY IS GROWN UP NOW... AND THE LAUGHTER IS GONE FROM HIS EYES...
ALL RIGHT, CONLEY! DROP IT!
SO... I WAS RIGHT. YOU DID COME HERE, AND YOU'VE GONE ALL THE WAY THIS TIME, HAVEN'T YOU, EDDIE? YOU'VE EVEN GOT... A GUN...

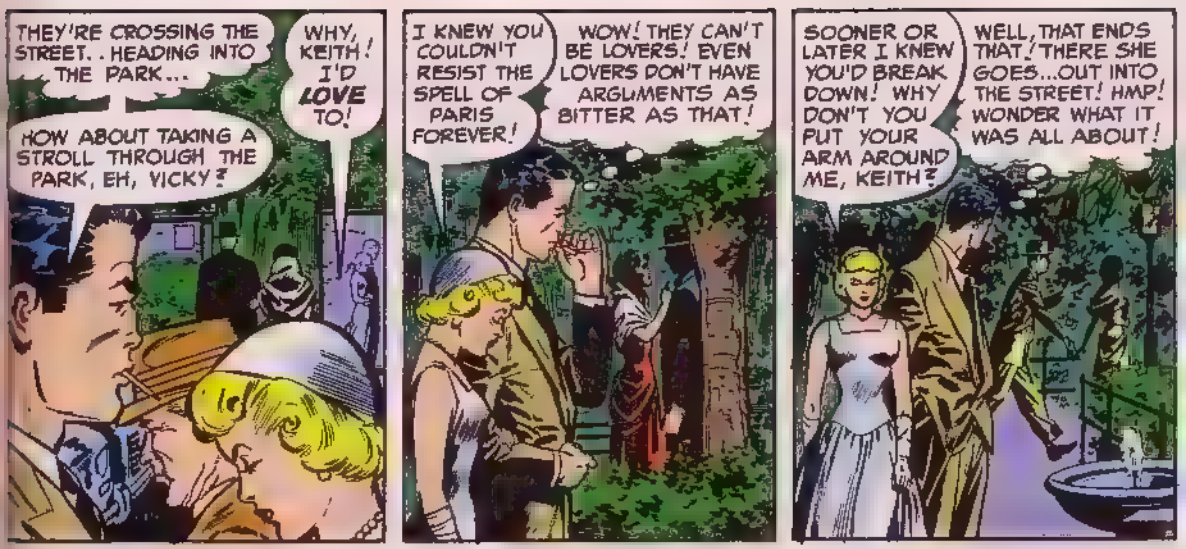
YEAH! SO WHAT? I'M A BIG SHOT NOW! JUST STAY BACK! LEAVE ME ALONE!
YOU GOING TO KILL ME, EDDIE? GO AHEAD. YOU KILLED THE MAN WHO GAVE YOU A HOME, WHO TRIED TO BE A FATHER TO YOU! WHY SHOULDN'T YOU KILL ME, TOO?
WE DID OUR BEST FOR YOU. WE BOTH TRIED TO BE FATHERS TO YOU. BUT YOU DIDN'T WANT IT THAT WAY. SO NOW... GIVE ME THE GUN, EDDIE...
STAY AWAY FROM ME, CONLEY! GET BACK! I'M GOING TO BE IMPORTANT LIKE MY REAL FATHER MUST HAVE BEEN!
HE WAS GOING TO SHOOT YOU! IT'S A GOOD THING DAGGER INSISTED ON COMING IN THE BACK WAY! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, MIKE?
I'M ALL RIGHT...POOR EDDIE... NATURE SURE MUST HAVE BEEN LAUGHING WHEN SHE MADE HIM!
THE LAST CHAPTER IS OVER. IT ENDS WITH SORROW, AND AN OLD MAN'S SIGH... AND WITH WORDS, CLICKED OUT IN CRISP, CLEAN TYPE...
NOT A BAD SHOT! NOT BAD AT ALL! FINISHED, GERI?
ALL FINISHED, DAGGER. THE STORY OF EDDIE HARRIS...WHO TWISTED A DREAM INTO A NIGHTMARE!
VERY DRAMATIC! NOW SUPPOSE YOU TELL ME WHAT WAS GOING ON! ALL THAT RAVING ABOUT HIS FATHER, AND THAT CLIPPING! WHAT WAS IN THAT CLIPPING?
JUST ANOTHER STORY, DAGGER. ONE THAT HAPPENED SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO! HERE...
OH.. I..I SEE. THAT'S WHY THEY NEVER TOLD EDDIE THE TRUTH ABOUT HIS FATHER!
THAT'S WHY, DAGGER. NOW, DO ME A FAVOR, WILL YOU? GO AWAY... I.. I THINK I'M.. GOING TO CRY.
ROOKIE COP KILLS HOODLUM AFTER STICKUP
June 9, 1938
In a running gun-battle, Patrolman Michael Conley today shot and killed James Harris, ex-convict. Harris is survived by Edward, a one year old son.
THE END

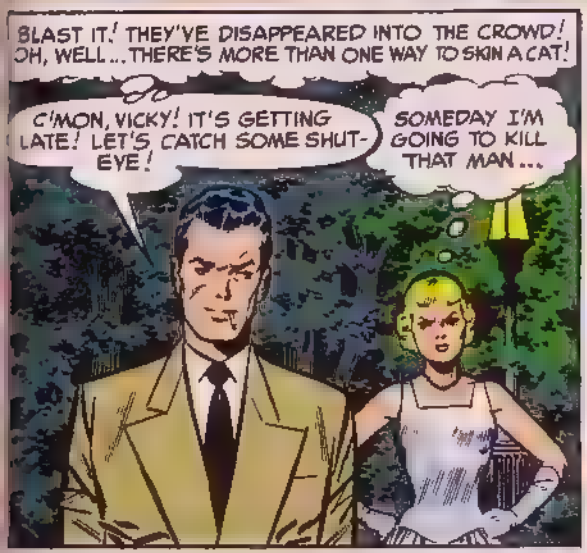
DATELINE: PARIS

THE GLISTENING AIRLINER SETTLED SMOOTHLY ONTO THE RUNWAY AND TAXIED TO A STOP BEFORE THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING. ITS PASSENGERS WERE HERDED INSIDE WHERE THEY IMMEDIATELY DISSOLVED INTO THE CROWD. KEITH RESTED HIS BAGS BEFORE A LUNCH COUNTER, AND SLIPPED ONTO A STOOL...

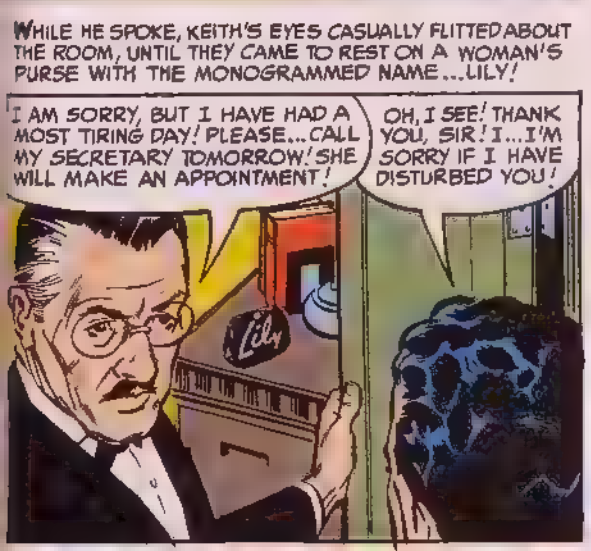

VICKY! WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU DOING HERE IN PARIS?
HI, KEITH! MAC SENT ME TO KEEP YOU COMPANY ON YOUR ASSIGNMENT HERE AND TO FILL YOU IN ON THE DETAILS, SO STOP FROWNING! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE HAPPY!

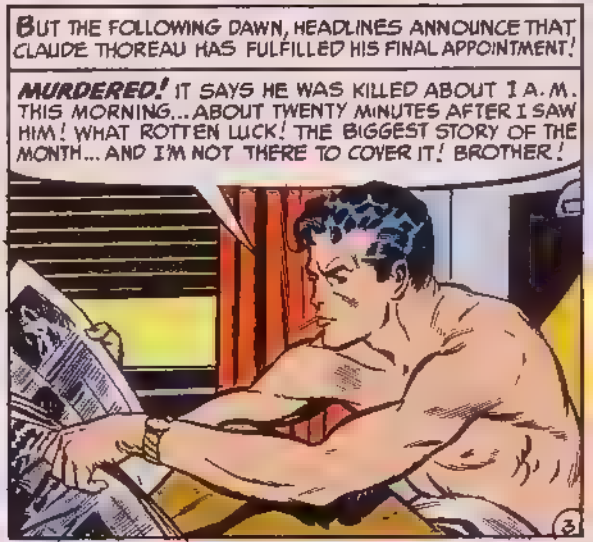

HMPF! YOU MEAN MAC WANTED YOU TO KEEP TABS ON ME, TO BE SURE I DON'T GOOF LIKE I DID ON THAT ALGIERS ASSIGNMENT!
NONSENSE! YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT. HE ONLY WANTED ME TO CHEER YOU UP! HE KNEW YOU'D BE DOWN IN THE DUMPS!
...AND WHAT BETTER PLACE IS THERE TO FORGET ONE'S CARES, THAN MAD, MUSICAL, MAGICAL PARIS... IN THE SPRING!
BALONEY!
Cafe
ALL RIGHT, SO IT'S NOT SPRING, BUT WHO CARES? PERK UP! YOU'RE IN PARIS! THE CITY OF LIGHT... LAND OF ROMANCE! YOU KNOW... BOY MEETS GIRL, BOY LOSES GIRL, BOY...
BOY KILLS GIRL 'CAUSE SHE TALKS TOO MUCH! OKAY, VICKY, YOU WIN!
MAC'S WIRE SAID TO CHECK ON A RIFT IN THE FRENCH CABINET! IS THAT ALL?
MMM... JUST ABOUT! TWO CABINET MEMBERS ARE AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS! THEIR DEBATES ARE SO VIOLENT, THEY'RE MAKING PUBLIC THREATS, AND TWICE THEY CAME TO BLOWS!
WHO ARE THEY?
GEORGE BENOIT AND CLAUDE THOREAU! YOU'VE SEEN THEM BEFORE, BUT YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BENOIT'S WIFE LILY! SHE'S A SINGER, A REAL DOLL, AND I JUST HAPPEN TO HAVE TWO TICKETS TO HER LATEST SHOW! INTERESTED?
A FEW HOURS LATER KEITH AND VICKY GENEROUSLY APPLAUD LILY BENOIT'S EXCITING PERFORMANCE...
ISN'T SHE WONDERFUL, KEITH?
SURE IS! UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, WE'LL BE SEEING HER IN HOLLYWOOD BEFORE LONG!
...AND SOME MOMENTS LATER, WHILE WAITING FOR A TAXI OUTSIDE THE THEATRE...
AH, PARIS! SO THRILLING! SO ENCHANTING! ROMANCE IS EVERYWHERE!
WELL, I'LL BE HANGED! THERE'S LILY BENOIT! AND THAT'S CLAUDE THOREAU WITH HER! NOW WHY IS SHE WITH HER HUSBAND'S WORST ENEMY? HMMM...
LILY
BE
BENOIT
2

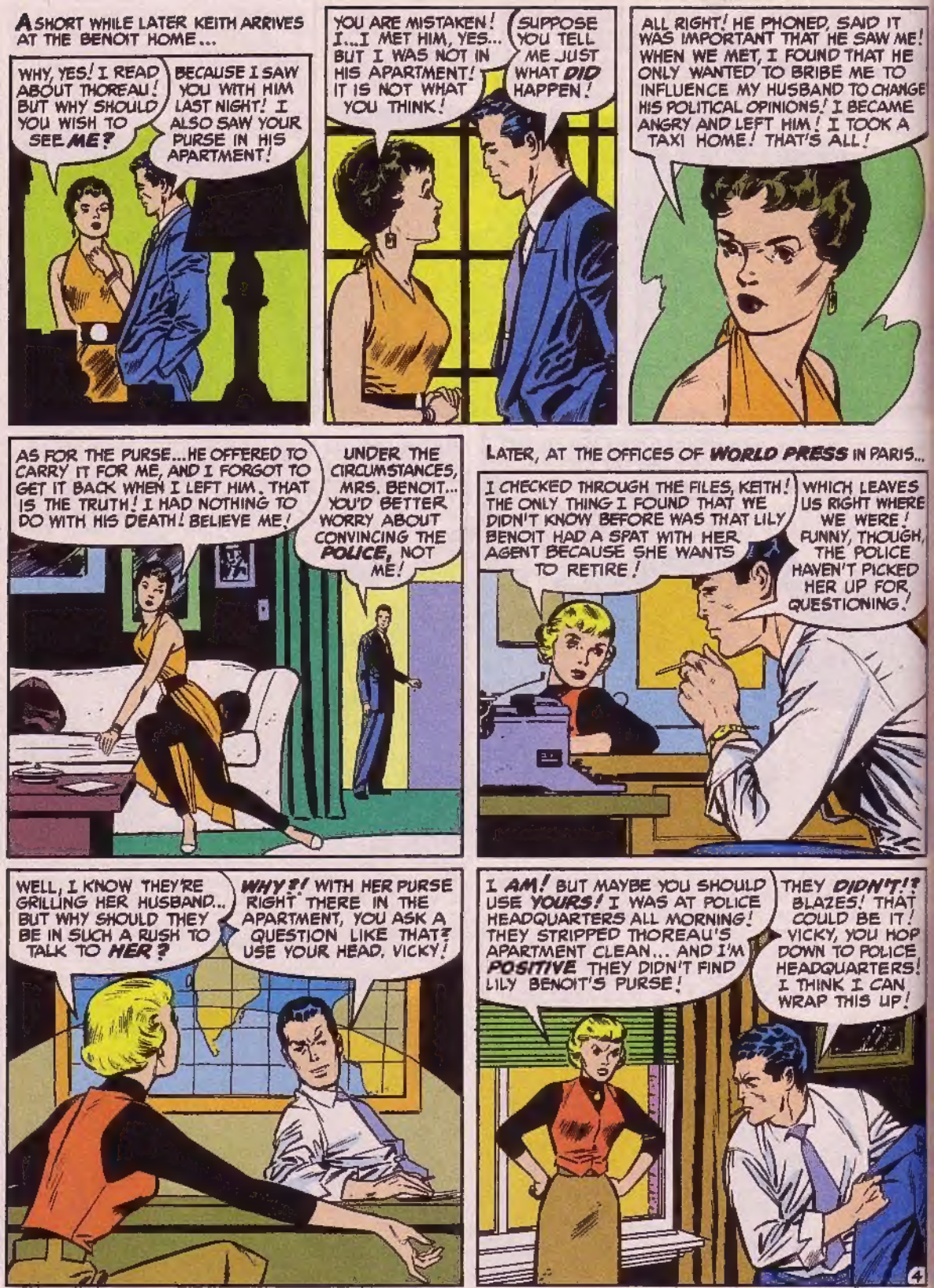

THEY'RE CROSSING THE STREET. . HEADING INTO THE PARK...
WHY, KEITH! I'D LOVE TO!
HOW ABOUT TAKING A STROLL THROUGH THE PARK, EH, VICKY?
I KNEW YOU COULDN'T RESIST THE SPELL OF PARIS FOREVER!
WOW! THEY CAN'T BE LOVERS! EVEN LOVERS DON'T HAVE ARGUMENTS AS BITTER AS THAT!
SOONER OR LATER I KNEW YOU'D BREAK DOWN! WHY DON'T YOU PUT YOUR ARM AROUND ME, KEITH?
WELL, THAT ENDS THAT! THERE SHE GOES...OUT INTO THE STREET! HMP! WONDER WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT!


BLAST IT! THEY'VE DISAPPEARED INTO THE CROWD! OH, WELL...THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SKIN A CAT!
C'MON, VICKY! IT'S GETTING LATE! LET'S CATCH SOME SHUT-EYE!
SOMEDAY I'M GOING TO KILL THAT MAN...

AFTER LEAVING VICKY AT HER HOTEL, KEITH VISITS THE HOME OF CLAUDE THOREAU...
YES? WHAT IS IT? WHAT DO YOU WISH?
I KNOW IT'S VERY LATE, MISTER THOREAU, BUT I'M A REPORTER, AND I'D LIKE TO INTERVIEW YOU!


WHILE HE SPOKE, KEITH'S EYES CASUALLY FLITTED ABOUT THE ROOM, UNTIL THEY CAME TO REST ON A WOMAN'S PURSE WITH THE MONOGRAMMED NAME...LILY!
I AM SORRY, BUT I HAVE HAD A MOST TIRING DAY! PLEASE...CALL MY SECRETARY TOMORROW! SHE WILL MAKE AN APPOINTMENT!
OH, I SEE! THANK YOU, SIR! I...I'M SORRY IF I HAVE DISTURBED YOU!
Lily


BUT THE FOLLOWING DAWN, HEADLINES ANNOUNCE THAT CLAUDE THOREAU HAS FULFILLED HIS FINAL APPOINTMENT!
MURDERED! IT SAYS HE WAS KILLED ABOUT 1 A.M. THIS MORNING...ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES AFTER I SAW HIM! WHAT ROTTEN LUCK! THE BIGGEST STORY OF THE MONTH...AND I'M NOT THERE TO COVER IT! BROTHER!


A SHORT WHILE LATER KEITH ARRIVES AT THE BENOIT HOME...
WHY, YES! I READ ABOUT THOREAU! BUT WHY SHOULD YOU WISH TO SEE ME?
BECAUSE I SAW YOU WITH HIM LAST NIGHT! I ALSO SAW YOUR PURSE IN HIS APARTMENT!
YOU ARE MISTAKEN! I...I MET HIM, YES... BUT I WAS NOT IN HIS APARTMENT! IT IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK!
SUPPOSE YOU TELL ME JUST WHAT DID HAPPEN!
ALL RIGHT! HE PHONED, SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT HE SAW ME! WHEN WE MET, I FOUND THAT HE ONLY WANTED TO BRIBE ME TO INFLUENCE MY HUSBAND TO CHANGE HIS POLITICAL OPINIONS! I BECAME ANGRY AND LEFT HIM! I TOOK A TAXI HOME! THAT'S ALL!
AS FOR THE PURSE...HE OFFERED TO CARRY IT FOR ME, AND I FORGOT TO GET IT BACK WHEN I LEFT HIM. THAT IS THE TRUTH! I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH HIS DEATH! BELIEVE ME!
UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, MRS. BENOIT... YOU'D BETTER WORRY ABOUT CONVINCING THE POLICE, NOT ME!
LATER, AT THE OFFICES OF WORLD PRESS IN PARIS...
I CHECKED THROUGH THE FILES, KEITH! THE ONLY THING I FOUND THAT WE DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE WAS THAT LILY BENOIT HAD A SPAT WITH HER AGENT BECAUSE SHE WANTS TO RETIRE!
WHICH LEAVES US RIGHT WHERE WE WERE! FUNNY, THOUGH, THE POLICE HAVEN'T PICKED HER UP FOR QUESTIONING!
WELL, I KNOW THEY'RE GRILLING HER HUSBAND... BUT WHY SHOULD THEY BE IN SUCH A RUSH TO TALK TO HER?
WHY?! WITH HER PURSE RIGHT THERE IN THE APARTMENT, YOU ASK A QUESTION LIKE THAT? USE YOUR HEAD, VICKY!
I AM! BUT MAYBE YOU SHOULD USE YOURS! I WAS AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS ALL MORNING! THEY STRIPPED THOREAU'S APARTMENT CLEAN... AND I'M POSITIVE THEY DIDN'T FIND LILY BENOIT'S PURSE!
THEY DIDN'T!? BLAZES! THAT COULD BE IT! VICKY, YOU HOP DOWN TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS! I THINK I CAN WRAP THIS UP!
4

STILL LATER, THE BENOIT RESIDENCE.
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU AGAIN, BUT IT'S PRETTY IMPORTANT!
OF COURSE. THIS IS MY AGENT ALEX! YOU MAY SPEAK FREELY!
UMMM!
I'LL COME RIGHT TO THE POINT! YOU ADMITTED YOUR PURSE WAS IN THOREAU'S APARTMENT! YET, THE POLICE DIDN'T FIND IT, EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE ON THE SCENE ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES AFTER HE WAS MURDERED!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
WHAT?
YOU CAN'T PROVE THAT MY PURSE WAS EVER IN THOREAU'S APARTMENT! ALEX, HERE, WILL VOUCH THAT HE SAW ME HOME AFTER I LEFT THOREAU IN THE PARK!
AH! YOU'RE NO LONGER WORRIED ABOUT YOUR PURSE! THAT CAN ONLY MEAN THAT YOU NOW HAVE IT BACK, WHICH PUTS YOU IN A VERY AWKWARD POSITION, MRS. BENOIT!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU THINK OR SAY! YOU HAVE NO PROOF! NO ONE SAW MY PURSE THERE!
ON THE CONTRARY! I SAW IT THERE... TWENTY MINUTES BEFORE HE DIED! AND SINCE THE POLICE DIDN'T FIND IT... IT'S ALMOST CERTAIN THAT THE KILLER WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO HAD THE OPPORTUNITY!
THE... KILLER? WAIT... I'M... I'M CONFUSED! YOU DON'T THINK I MURDERED THOREAU, DO YOU?!
WHO ELSE WOULD BENEFIT BY TAKING THE PURSE?
NO! NO, IT WAS ALEC!
SHUT UP, YOU FOOL!
I WON'T SHUT UP! HE TRICKED ME, MR. MICHAELS! HE BROUGHT ME THE PURSE TODAY, AND TOLD ME HE HAD FOUND IT AFTER THE POLICE HAD SEARCHED THE APARTMENT! HE SAID IT WOULD RUIN MY HUSBAND'S CAREER IF IT HAD BEEN FOUND!
SHUT UP, I SAY! YOU'RE RUINING EVERYTHING!
5

I ONLY DID WHAT HE SAID TO PROTECT MY HUSBAND! ALEX SAID HE WOULDN'T TELL ANYONE IF...
...IF YOU AGREED TO GO TO HOLLYWOOD! RIGHT?
THAT IS CORRECT, MR. MICHAELS! I STOOD TO LOSE A FORTUNE IF SHE RETIRED FROM SHOW BUSINESS! LAST NIGHT, AFTER I SAW HER ARGUING WITH THOREAU, I WENT TO HIS APARTMENT!
I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD BEEN THERE BEFORE ME! I THOUGHT I MIGHT FIND OUT SOMETHING THAT WOULD ENABLE ME TO FORCE HER TO GO TO HOLLYWOOD!
AND THEN YOU SAW HER PURSE, EH?
YES! THE WHOLE IDEA CAME TO ME! I KNEW THAT SHE'D DO ANYTHING TO SAVE HER HUSBAND'S CAREER, AND TO IMPLICATE HER AS WELL IN THOREAU'S DEATH WOULD MAKE THINGS VERY EASY FOR ME!
EVERYTHING WOULD HAVE GONE SMOOTHLY, IF YOU HADN'T PUT YOUR NOSE INTO IT, MICHAELS!
NOW DON'T DO ANYTHING RASH, JUNIOR...
I'M GOING TO BLOW YOUR...
OW!
HEY! THE MARINES HAVE LANDED!
YOU OKAY, KEITH? BOY! LOOKS LIKE WE GOT HERE JUST IN TIME! THIS GENDARME WAS ESCORTING MR. BENOIT HOME FROM HEADQUARTERS, SO I CAME ALONG TO GET AN INTERVIEW! WE HEARD EVERYTHING!
MR. MICHAELS, FORGIVE ME FOR THE WAY I'VE TREATED YOU! HOW CAN I THANK YOU?
MMMM... WELL, IN ALL THE STORIES I'VE READ, THE HERO ALWAYS GETS A GREAT BIG K...
OWCH!
COME ALONG, SIR GALAHAD! YOU'VE GOT A DATE WITH A DEADLINE!
THE END

DOUBLE CROSS

With screeching tires, the car careened through the night, skidding perilously on the rain-swept road. Inside the car, a tense reporter hunched over the wheel, gripping it tightly, while the swish-swish of the wipers whispered softly in rhythm to the rapid beating of his heart.

It seemed hours before he eased to a stop before the lodge. Methodically he turned off the lights and ignition, and settled back in his seat. The sudden silence of the motor gave birth to a new sound; the sound of the raindrops pelting the car top, trickling down the windows, rustling through the leaves of the surrounding trees. It roused him from his weariness, and he got out. The stiffness awakened in his limbs and back as he lowered his head determinedly and strode to the door of the lodge. He knocked loudly.

The door opened slightly. A shaft of light fell across his face, hurting his eyes, then the door swung wider and he entered. He gave a cursory glance to the room then turned his attention to the girl. She had closed the door and now moved nearer to him, staring at him intently. There was fear in her eyes.

"Okay, Lila," he said. "You wanted to see me. Here I am."

There came a chuckle from behind him, and the reporter whirled. From an alcove stepped two men. One was short, mustached and had a gun while the other, a huge, hulking ox, lumbered over and with experienced hands, frisked the newshound. Finding nothing, he ambled to the door and leaned his back against it.

Johnny Lombard, the little man, moved toward the reporter. "You've given me a rough time in your paper, fella," he sneered, "and I know you have a lot of evidence against me but need a witness to make it stick. That's why I knew you'd come here if you thought Lila had left me. You reporters will do anything for a scoop. But it was just a trick, wise guy. Just a trick to get you where I wanted you."

The ugly gun rose till it pointed directly at the reporter. There could be no more waiting. With a swift movement, he knocked the gun aside and slammed a right to Lombard's jaw, sending him sprawling backwards over a table. Almost instantly he felt the crushing weight of the ox upon him, bearing him heavily to the floor where they struggled desperately, until suddenly the room came alive with shouts and thundering feet as a horde of policemen swarmed in. Moments later it was all over.

Johnny Lombard staggered to his feet, rubbing his swollen jaw and staring heatedly at the grinning news man.

The reporter was lighting a welcome cigarette. "You didn't quite make it, Lombard," he smiled. "It was cute getting Lila to pretend she was through with you, so you could eliminate me, but you didn't figure on the one thing that could ruin your plan. Lila. You see, Lombard, she really did want out, but was afraid and didn't know how to go about it. When you came up with this idea, she realized it was perfect for her, so she tipped me off to the whole deal. It was she who gave me all the evidence I have on you. But you were right about one thing, and only one thing. A reporter WILL do anything for a scoop."